

# Reducing Tobacco Use Among High-Risk Populations

## Tobacco Facts

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### Good health for all

In Washington, 19.5 percent of adults smoke. Many racial, ethnic, or poor communities have higher smoking rates.

The smoking rate for American Indians and Alaskan natives is 35 percent, for Vietnamese men is 38 percent, for Pacific Islander men is 32 percent, and for African Americans is 23 percent.

Research shows that tobacco use among some population groups is higher than for the general population. These groups also often have less access to healthcare and other resources. The result is a health disparity or a disproportionate occurrence of tobacco-related death and disease.

Tobacco-related health disparities are influenced by many factors, including the socioeconomic status, geographic location, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability of a population. The history, cultural beliefs, and country of origin of many populations also can affect their tobacco-use rates. Tobacco companies have contributed to these health disparities as well by using targeted political, marketing, and charitable-giving strategies to create long-term loyalty and demand for their products. Reducing tobacco use in high-risk groups is one of four central goals of the Department of Health's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

### Strategic planning

The Tobacco Program convened the Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco in April 2001 to identify innovative ways of eliminating tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in high-risk populations. The workgroup included organizations from culturally diverse populations, existing Tobacco Program contractors, and others working to address health disparities. The workgroup identified six critical issues that needed to be addressed to eliminate tobacco-related health disparities:

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- Lack of sustained funding
- Lack of outreach and access to programs and services
- Low priority of the tobacco issue in high-risk communities
- Institutional racism
- Lack of focused resources
- Tobacco companies' targeting of high-risk communities.

## **Tobacco Disparities Advisory Committee**

American Lung Association

Center for Multicultural  
Health

Fred Hutchinson Cancer  
Research Center -  
Cancer Information Service

Latino Health Network  
Northwest

Mary Mahoney Nurses  
Association

My Service Mind

Northwest Communities  
Education Center/  
KDNA Radio

Northwest Portland Area  
Indian Health Board

Private citizen

Verbená

Washington Health  
Foundation

Washington Asian Pacific  
Islander Coalition  
Against Tobacco

For more information on  
tobacco prevention:  
[www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/](http://www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/)

The Cross Cultural Workgroup developed three- to five-year goals to address the six critical issues. These goals established the structure for the *Strategic Plan for Identifying and Eliminating Tobacco-Related Health Disparities in Washington State*, which was completed in May 2003. The plan is a comprehensive framework to guide statewide efforts to improve the health of high-risk populations. It identifies strategies needed to prevent and reduce tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure among these groups.

The Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco completed its planning work in September 2004. The Tobacco Program convened the Tobacco Disparities Advisory Committee in January 2005 to guide future efforts to implement the strategic plan. This committee includes members of the Cross Cultural Workgroup on Tobacco, members of racial/ethnic communities, current tobacco program contractors, and others interested in addressing health disparities.

### **Initial efforts**

The Tobacco Program has begun addressing many of the objectives in the plan, including funding and training contractors in five high-risk communities, and improving the cultural appropriateness of its programs, services, materials, advertising, and approaches.

### **Evaluation of the plan**

The Tobacco Program will evaluate the implementation of *The Strategic Plan for Identifying and Eliminating Tobacco-Related Health Disparities in Washington State* to ensure activities achieve desired outcomes. The Tobacco Program also is improving its surveys, materials, and activities to try reach people who speak different languages.

### **A comprehensive approach to fighting tobacco use**

Research shows that state tobacco prevention programs must be broad-based and comprehensive to be effective. In addition to supporting activities in high-risk populations, Washington's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program supports programs in communities and schools, conducts public awareness and media campaigns, provides services to help people quit, encourages smoke-free environments, restricts the ability of kids to get tobacco, and evaluates the effectiveness of state and local program activities.

[Back to High-risk groups](#)